

# East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 3rd November, 2022

## MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Long (Chairperson),  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor M. Kelly);  
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Rodgers  
and Sandford;  
Councillors, Bower, Flynn, Hanvey, Kyle, Maghie,  
McMullan, Newton and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;  
Ms. N.Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal & Civic  
Services  
Ms. S. Murtagh, Programme Manager; and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf The High Sheriff, Councillor Hussey, Councillors Douglas, de Faoite and Howard.

### Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 8th September were an accurate record of proceedings.

The Working Group noted that there were discrepancies in the attendance list, namely that Councillor Bower was also in attendance and that the Civic Dignitaries were incorrect.

### Declarations of Interest

Following receipt of legal advice that some of the proposed projects were either currently in the planning process or were likely to have to apply for planning if they were to proceed, Alderman Rodgers, as a Member of the Planning Committee, declared an interest and left the meeting and did not return as this was a one item agenda. Councillors Hussey and Douglas did not attend the Working Group for the same reason.

Councillor Newton declared an interest in one of the applicants, Ulster Rugby, in that his employment was associated the organisation and left the meeting and did not return as this was a one item agenda.

Alderman Sandford and Councillor Kyle declared an interest as a Board Member of the Eastside Learning Board.

Alderman Dorrian and Councillors M. Kelly, Maghie, McMullan and Smyth declared an interest in that they were Council representative's on Eastside Partnership Board.

### **Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund**

The Working Group received a presentation on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund and considered the undernoted report:

#### **"1. Introduction**

**Members will be aware that the Council has recently launched its £10m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund. This report provides an outline of the applications received in the East area. In line with the agreed process, Members are asked to make recommendations to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on which applications they now wish to move forward to *Stage 2 – Development Stage*.**

#### **2. Recommendations**

**Members are asked to:**

- Note the update provided on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund,**
- Note the applications that did not meet the minimum threshold and that these applicants are to be advised that they have been unsuccessful. Feedback on their applications will be provided to Groups.**
- Consider which projects they wish to recommend to SP&R Committee to move forward to *Stage 2 – Development* under the Fund. In considering this, Members are asked to note that it is recommended that a maximum of 3 or 4 projects are progressed at this stage given the level of funding available and current resource capacity, and;**
- Note the proposed approach that the Council will provide a response to each applicant that is not moving forward to Stage 2 at this time, outlining other potential avenues of support.**

#### **3. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund**

##### **Background**

**The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund is a £10m capital fund to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. Members will recall that the fund was originally £8m and has been bolstered by an additional £2m via the reallocation of year end surpluses. The fund attracted significant interest and a high volume of applications was received. Members were advised that they would be updated on the outcome of the *Stage 1 - Application* stage once all the applications were collated and reviewed by an assessment panel against the agreed project assessment matrix. This is now complete subject to legal validation.**

The Fund encompasses a three-stage process, approved by Council in November 2021. Stage 1 is the application phase; Stage 2 is the development phase and Stage 3 is the delivery phase. The application stage closed on 12 May 2022. In line with the timeframe presented to Members in November 2021, an intensive period of eligibility review, validation, panel assessment and moderation has now been completed. Applications that have scored over the minimum threshold are now presented to Members for consideration.

**Assessment process**

As agreed by Council, projects were assessed and scored against four key criteria: affordability, feasibility, deliverability, and sustainability. Assessments were made solely on the basis of information supplied by the applicant within their submission. This included the application form and supporting documentation provided by applicants by the closing date such as business plans and economic appraisals.

The NRF is an outcomes focused programme aligned to three key themes emerging from the City Recovery Framework: social economy, environmental sustainability and neighbourhood tourism. The fund is adopting an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach derived directly from these three themes and all applications have been specifically assessed in terms of their alignment to these outcomes.

**Applications summary**

A total of 101 organisations requested the application pack and 61 organisations submitted an application. The proposals presented in the applications showcase a wide variety of exciting new ideas for the city as well as enhancements to existing facilities. Overall, the standard of the applications was very high, and this is reflected in the proportion that achieved above the threshold (75%).

Total applications:

	Total	South	North	West	Shankill	East	Location to be determined
Total applications	61	13	16	14	3	13	2
Total above threshold	46	9	14	13	3	7	0

**STAGE 1 APPLICATION RESULTS**

The information presented below is based on the application forms and is presented for Members’ consideration.

### **Applications scoring below threshold**

Organisations that scored below threshold (Location to be determined: 2, East: 6) will be notified that they have been unsuccessful and provided with feedback on their applications as well as advice regarding other potential sources of support.

All Area Working Groups will be advised that a total of 2 applications did not determine a location for their project as a site or building has not been secured. Neither project reached above threshold. Although both applications demonstrated reasonable alignment to themes and outcomes, overall both applications required more detailed information in several other areas to acquire higher scores. A summary is provided below.

Details of applications below threshold – Location to be determined:

<b>Project Name, Brief Description &amp; Theme</b>
<b>Supported Employment &amp; Sales Training (SEST) CIC</b> <b><u>SEST CIC</u></b>  <i>Theme: Social Economy</i>  The project will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Purchase of a building and development of a call centre</li></ul>
<b>NI Community Energy (NICE)</b> <b><u>Belfast Community Energy Action</u></b>  <i>Theme: Social Economy &amp; Environmental Sustainability</i>  The project will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Making energy efficiencies and installing solar panels, energy storage and EV chargers as appropriate that is co-owned by a local Belfast neighbourhood.</li></ul>

### **Details of application below threshold - East:**

<b>Project Name, Brief Description &amp; Theme</b>
<b>Hanwood Trust Company Ltd</b> <b><u>Hanwood Trust Social Economy Project</u></b>  <i>Theme: Social Economy</i>  The project will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improvements to security and lighting at the business park.</li></ul>
<b>Lagan Village Youth and Community Group</b> <b><u>Forward Together</u></b>

*Theme: Social Economy*

The project will include:

- Refurbishment of the community centre facilities to include a new accessible toilet block and a new reception area.

**Nettlefield Multisports**  
**Nettlefield Multisports New Generation**

*Theme: Social Economy*

The project will include:

- Upgrade of the existing polymeric pitch to a 3G/4G surface to attract more teams / individuals to use it.

**Ballymac Friendship Trust**  
**Experience East**

*Theme: All*

The project will include:

- Purchase of a run-down property at the bottom of the Albertbridge Road and transforming it into a tourist attraction including accommodation where visitors have the opportunity to design and paint their own mural.

**Cycling Ulster & Cycling Ireland**  
**Henry Jones Playing Fields Cycling Project**

*Theme: All*

The project will include:

- Development and build of a new multi- disciplinary cycling facility that supports the development of cycling from grassroots to international cyclists in Belfast.

**The Phoenix Education Centre**  
**Community Upskilling**

*Theme: Social Economy*

The project will include:

- Purchase and refurbishment of a property to be converted into a permanent premises for The Phoenix Education Centre.

**Applications scoring above threshold**

**Members are aware that the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund is now a £10m capital programme. The total allocation towards East projects is £2,287,501. No allocations of funding will be made until business cases are produced after Stage 2 - Development. All the applications have now been reviewed by an assessment panel against the agreed project assessment matrix.**

**Details of applications above threshold – East:**

<b>Project Name, Brief Description &amp; Theme</b>
<p><b>EastSide Property Belfast Ltd</b> <b><u>EastSide Container Hotel</u></b></p> <p><i>Themes: Social Economy &amp; Neighbourhood Tourism</i></p> <p>The project will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of 10 unique serviced tourist apartments overlooking the C.S. Lewis Square in east Belfast.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ulster Rugby</b> <b><u>Nevin Spence Centre (NSC) Visitor Experience</u></b></p> <p><i>Themes: Neighbourhood Tourism</i></p> <p>The project will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major overhaul of the NSC Visitor Experience, involving a new layout, full re-design, new exhibitions and integration of new augmented reality technology.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (BURC)</b> <b><u>Portview Exchange - a makerspace in East Belfast</u></b></p> <p><i>Theme: Social Economy &amp; Neighbourhood Tourism</i></p> <p>The project will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a state-of-the-art studio on the Newtownards Road comprising significant additional artist studio space as well as private rooms, workshops, test labs, a kiln and a retail shop frontage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact Belfast</b> <b><u>Impact Belfast</u></b></p> <p><i>Themes: Social Economy</i></p> <p>The project will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regeneration of the former church at 122-128 Ravenhill Road into a state-of-the-art social Impact Hub providing facilities for social impact organisations to work, collaborate, network and grow. The interior fit-out will comprise 65 permanent desks, seminar space and meeting facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>East Belfast Mission</b> <b><u>Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road</u></b></p> <p><i>Themes: Social Economy &amp; Environmental Sustainability</i></p> <p>The project will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demolition, alterations and refurbishment to existing building into two apartments for the people who have been homeless and with a community/ commercial space on the ground floor.</li> </ul>

**Dundela Football, Athletic and Social Club**  
**Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park**

*Themes: Social Economy*

The project will include:

- Construction of a state-of-the-art 3G community sports pitch which will greatly enhance sporting and recreational facilities in the heart of East Belfast.

**Skainos Limited**  
**Improving Skainos' Carbon Footprint**

*Theme: Social Economy & Environmental Sustainability*

The project will include:

- Renovation and replacement work to the existing solar panels on the roof and installation of Air Source heat pumps to the existing heating system.

**Next Steps**

Members will appreciate that given the level of funding available and current resources it will not be possible for each project to be moved to **Stage 2 – Development**. At this stage it is recommended that a maximum of 3 or 4 projects per area are moved to the next stage.

**Projects agreed to be moved forward to Stage 2 – Development**

The projects agreed to be moved forward to **Stage 2 – Development** will be allocated a Project Sponsor who will work closely with the Group throughout the **Stage 2 Development** Stage. The exact requirements for Stage 2 will be dependent on the individual status and needs of each project, for example it could be the development of a business case or economic appraisal, testing of a business case, capacity building and/or the development of detailed designs. The assigned Project Sponsor will meet with the Group once decisions are ratified by Council and will work with the Group to determine requirements.

Members are asked to note that it is proposed that the development phase will be timebound to six months with updates on all projects to be brought back to the AWGs at the same time. At the end of this stage, recommendations to Committee will include a detailed update on each project, seeking approval for funding. Projects that receive approval will be issued with a Letter of Offer in principle and will move to **Stage 3 - Delivery**. However, a final investment decision will not be taken until a tender has been returned.

**Projects not being moved forward to Stage 2 – Development at this stage**

The projects not being progressed to Stage 2 at this time will be advised of the outcome. Groups will be offered the opportunity to request feedback on their application. In addition, it is proposed that officers will help Groups identify alternative potential sources of support. For example, some applicants will also be able to avail of business support and mentoring through the Council's Social Enterprise & Co-operative Support Programme and Enterprise Framework. This will be tailored to each individual project.

It is recommended however that projects that reached threshold but are not progressed at this Stage are held at Stage 1 in case any of the projects which are moved forward do not progress beyond Stage 2. If this happens then projects will be presented again for Members' consideration.

**Members are asked to:**

- Note the update provided on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund,
- Note the applications that did not meet the minimum threshold and that these applicants are to be advised that they have been unsuccessful. Feedback on their applications will be provided to Groups.
- Consider which projects they wish to recommend to SP&R Committee to move forward to *Stage 2 – Development* under the Fund. In considering this, Members are asked to note that it is recommended that a maximum of 3 or 4 projects are progressed at this stage given the level of funding available and current resource capacity, and;
- Note the proposed approach that the Council will provide a response to each applicant not moving forward to Stage 2 at this time, outlining other potential avenues of support.

**4. Financial and Resource Implications**

Financial - NRF *Stage 2 Development* expenditure will be funded via the agreed NRF budget of £10m.

Resources – Officer time from Physical Programmes Department.

**5. Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund has been equality screened.”

The Director of Physical Programmes took the Members through the detail regarding the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, as outlined in the aforementioned report.

She advised that the fund had attracted significant interest with 101 organisations having requested the application pack and 61 organisations having applied for funding. She



continued by expressing thanks to the Physical Programmes staff for the work and effort that they had put into assessing the applications received within the projected timescale.

The Director then provided an overview of the assessment process, as previously agreed by Council, reporting that the applications had been assessed and scored against the following four key criteria: affordability, feasibility, deliverability, and sustainability. She drew the Members' attention to the applications that had scored below the threshold and advised that each organisation would be notified that it had been unsuccessful and provided with feedback on the application.

The Members noted the applications that had not reached the threshold and welcomed the fact that officers would offer feedback to those organisations in respect of their application. The Members encouraged further liaison with all applicants not moving forward at this stage on any other potential sources of support that might be available.

The Director of Physical Programmes took the Members through the applications that had scored above the threshold in the East.

Following discussion, the Working Group agreed that the following four projects would progress to Stage 2 – Development under the NRF:

- EastSide Property Belfast Ltd;
- Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (BURC);
- Ulster Rugby; and
- Impact Belfast

The Working Group noted that applicants that had reached above minimal threshold but had not been successful in progressing to Stage 2, at this time, would be informed accordingly and that each applicant would be offered the opportunity for their application to be retained on the list at Stage 1 – Application stage for consideration if a reserve list was required, namely East Belfast Mission; Dundela Football, Athletic and Social Club; and Skainos Limited.

Accordingly, the Working Group agreed:

- i. to note the update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. to note those applications which had not met the minimum threshold (Hanwood Trust Company Ltd, Lagan Village Youth and Community Group, Nettlefield Multisports, Ballymac Friendship Trust, Cycling Ulster & Cycling Ireland, Phoenix Education Centre, Supported Employment & Sales Training (SEST) CIC and NI Community Energy (NICE)) and that the applicants would be advised that they had been unsuccessful and receive feedback;
- iii. to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following four projects be progressed to Stage 2 – Development in East:
  - EastSide Property Belfast Ltd - EastSide Container Hotel project;
  - Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (BURC) - Portview Exchange project;
  - Ulster Rugby - Nevin Spence Centre (NSC) Visitor Experience project;
  - Impact Belfast – Impact Hub project; and

- iv. to note the proposed approach, that the Council would provide a response to each applicant whose project was not moving forward to Stage 2, at this time, outlining other potential avenues of support.

The Director of Physical Programmes also reminded the Members that the NRF was an open call application process and as this was a restricted item, the recommendations from the Area Working Group would need to be ratified by both the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Council, following which all applications would be notified of the outcome.

Chairperson